

Building a Student-Centered, Connected Credentials System

THE PROBLEM: *A fragmented, confusing, and inefficient credentials system*

Credentials in the U.S. range from badges and certifications to apprenticeships and certificate programs, all the way through degree programs and post-doctoral studies. Providing this diverse array of credentials are colleges and universities, industry, and third-party organizations. **Our “system” is fragmented, multi-layered, and complex. It no longer works for students, employers, or educators.** This fragmentation makes it difficult for employers to determine who is qualified for open jobs and challenging for students to understand if they’re on track to be career-ready. And because issuers of credentials operate in isolation, students often struggle to transfer credit from one postsecondary program to another, adding time and expense to the process of earning a degree or other credential.

THE VISION: *A student-centered, connected system of postsecondary credentials*

To address this challenge, the country needs a coherent national system of connecting all postsecondary credentials that is student centered and designed to reward quality. In such a system, individuals would have to demonstrate achievement of clear, concrete and well-conceived learning outcomes to earn quality credentials, and those credentials would be continually reexamined and validated to ensure they stay relevant and aligned with emerging industries and jobs. This system would reduce students and workers’ barriers to gaining the qualifications they need for success and build employer trust in credentials as they seek the skilled employees they need to compete globally. It also would break down the barriers between credentials issuers, ensuring that learners understand how credentials are connected and see the pathways they can follow to obtain desired credentials and reach their goals.

THREE STEPS TO A RENEWED CREDENTIALING SYSTEM



STEP 1: SUPPORTING A BROAD-BASED NATIONAL DIALOGUE

Lumina Foundation believes change in the credentialing marketplace should come from the producers and users of credentials and is starting a national dialogue to help accomplish this. This effort will have two parts:



- 1) During **2015**, Lumina, in partnership with the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW), the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), and 40 co-sponsors, will hold a series of conversations with constituency groups, national organizations, and regional leaders interested in reimagining credentialing. During these conversations, which will involve the groups closest to credentialing, stakeholders will discuss their credentialing experiences and start to field ideas for addressing the problem.
- 2) In **fall 2015**, the dialogue will be broadened to include more than 100 organizations, beginning with a Credentialing Summit at which lessons learned from the spring and summer conversations will be discussed through a public dialogue about the challenges posed by our nation's fragmented credentialing system. This dialogue will result in concrete solutions for addressing the challenges in our existing system.

STEP 2: CREATING AND TESTING A BETA CREDENTIALS FRAMEWORK

Lumina Foundation, in partnership with CSW and CLASP, is in the process of developing a “beta credentials framework” that would help to outline the knowledge and skills associated with each credential and create **a common language to describe what recipients of each credential should know and be able to do**. This would make credentials’ meaning more transparent, make it easier to compare credentials and make it possible to translate learning gained from one credential towards securing another. This framework will be informed by the conversations in the national dialogue in late 2015.

STEP 3: BUILDING A CREDENTIALS REGISTRY

The George Washington University Institute for Public Policy, in partnership with Workcred, an affiliate of the American National Standards Institute, is developing a “prototype credentials registry,” which would provide a centralized database of information on credentials, including their required competencies, labor market value, transfer value, cost to attain, and quality. **This online venue will allow for the exchange of information about credentials and organizations that issue them so that students, employers and others can ensure credentials’ quality.**

For more information, or to engage in the ongoing national dialogue, please contact:

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